

Bryn Mawr, PA – They fought in places like Normandy and Guadalcanal, Inchon and Uijeongbu, Khe Sanh and Hamburger Hill, Fallujah and Kabul. They risked their lives and watched their comrades die in defense of our nation. They are American heroes. And their stories must never be forgotten.

— This was the message Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-7) brought to the Bryn Mawr Terrace Convalescent Home today as he talked to the residents about the Veterans History Project. Congressman Sestak is a retired 3-Star U.S. Navy Admiral and the official House historian of the House has confirmed that he is the highest ranking military officer to ever serve in the U.S. House of Representatives.

“The men and women who have worn the cloth of our nation have taught us through example about the meaning of sacrifice, bravery, and patriotism,” Congressman Sestak said. “Their stories really are the story of this nation, of our fight for freedom and independence, of our commitment to defend the unique principals upon which we were founded. The best way we can pay tribute to the men and women of our military is to preserve their stories for future generations.”

The Veterans History Project began in 2000 as an effort to collect and archive the personal recollections of thousands of veterans who fought in our nation's wars, beginning with World War I right through to the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The oral histories of more than 50,000 veterans who have been interviewed by volunteers for the Project are stored in the American Folklife Center of the Library of Congress and are available on line. The Project also collects stories from home front civilians who worked in support of our armed forces.

Congressman Sestak recalled that it was the stories he heard from his own father, a World War II veteran who served 20 years as a captain in the Navy, that inspired him to join the military. “Just as the stories I heard as a child about the Battle of Leyte Gulf and the Surigao Straights ignited my passion and desire to serve my country, I am hopeful that the stories of the veterans who live here at Bryn Mawr Terrace may serve to motivate members of our younger generation to serve our nation,” Congressman Sestak said.

Veterans who are interested in sharing their recollections should contact Congressman Sestak's office at 610-892-8623.

Since taking the oath of office in January, Congressman Sestak has worked hard to ensure that the nation pays tribute to our veterans by ensuring that funding is available to provide them with quality health care, meaningful educational opportunities, and assistance to their families when needed.

He successfully fought for passage of two amendments to the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act, which will improve mental health care for our wounded soldiers. The first amendment highlights the fact that mental health care is an essential component to the medical services offered to our Veterans and the members of our Armed Services by clarifying that the definition of 'medical care' must include mental health care services.

The second amendment requires the Secretary of the Department of Defense to develop a plan to help prevent Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and other stress-related psychopathologies (including substance abuse conditions) from developing in our military service members.

*Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the U.S. House of Representatives.*